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FM REO BASRAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0298
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0004
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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0316

C O N F I D E N T I A L BASRAH 000050

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: UK CONSULATE BASRAH TO TRIM ITS PERSONNEL

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,
State Department.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) On April 7 and 9, UK Consul General (CG) James Tansley advised the Regional Coordinator (RC) for Regional Embassy Office Basrah (REO) that the UK Government planned to reduce temporarily Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) personnel at the consulate on the Basrah Palace compound. The recommendation by the CG was sent to the Foreign Secretary on April 7, and the CG expects pro forma concurrence on April 10. The recommendation, which the CG told the RC was prompted by inquiries from London, is based on the increase in coordinated indirect fire directed at the Basrah Palace compound and the decreased ability of the FCO staff to perform its work effectively while facing a boycott by the Basrah Provincial Council. This decision, according to the CG, will be reviewed in 10-14 days' time.

¶2. (C) The UK Deputy CG, Dominic Meiklejohn, provided more details on the drawdown to the RC on April 9. He said approximately 30 of the 180 consulate employees would be affected. Some will be transferred (PSD team moved to Basrah Air Station, two DFID contractors moved to Kuwait) and other personnel will have their leaves extended or go out on leave early. Five diplomatic positions at the consulate will be left vacant temporarily, though the Deputy CG said the REO would not notice any differences.

¶3. (C) The CG said that there were no plans to delay the start-up of the Basrah PRT. The UK deputy PRT leader still is expected to reach post in a few days, and the PRT leader is scheduled to arrive on April 21 or 22. None of the personnel working on PRT implementation are affected.

¶4. (C) Comment: Worries over a deteriorating security situation in Basrah, prompted by the April 4 sustained and coordinated indirect fire attack during the Queen's birthday party, and frustration over the ability of FCO employees to perform meaningful work led the CG to make the draw down recommendation. Subsidiary reasons for this decision are concerns over the effect among Shias in the south if Jafari is replaced as the UIA candidate for prime minister, along with rumors that the governor might be replaced, causing political upheaval. The CG and the Deputy CG voiced their opinions that this is only a temporary measure, but both went on to deplore the security situation and the general political malaise in Basrah. Regional Embassy Office Basrah will continue to work closely with the FCO and British military. End Comment.

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